

King Charles III, Queen Camilla crowned amid protests against British monarchy

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King Charles III receives a royal salute from members of the military in the gardens of Buckingham Place in London, on May 6, 2023, following his coronation. (Photo by AFP)

London, May 6 (RHC)-- The Coronation of King Charles III in London's historic Westminster Abbey, the first in the United Kingdom for seven decades, drew thousands of people into the streets to protest against the antiquated monarchical system.

The King and Queen Camilla were formally crowned on Saturday at a ceremony attended by more than 2,000 guests, including world leaders, aristocrats and celebrities. Trumpets sounded inside the medieval abbey and the congregation shouted "God save the king!"

And outside in the streets, thousands of troops, tens of thousands of spectators and thousands of protesters converged.

The Metropolitan Police deployed some 11,500 officers for one of its biggest-ever security operations for the day of the coronation. Condemnation poured in following the arrests of leading members of the anti-monarchy group Republic, which wants an elected head of state, said six of its members.

The Metropolitan Police, the UK's largest police force, had warned that it would have an "extremely low threshold" for protests, and controversially planned to use mass facial recognition technology to monitor the crowds.

"Our tolerance for any disruption, whether through protest or otherwise, will be low," the police force wrote on Twitter this week. "We will deal robustly with anyone intent on undermining this celebration."

However, even before the king and the queen left Buckingham Palace for a procession to the abbey, dozens of activists and protesters held aloft banners on the route, declaring: "Not My King."

Emmanuelle Andrews of the human rights group Liberty, said on Twitter: "We all have the right to go about our lives without being watched and monitored, but everyone at the coronation is at risk of having their faces scanned by oppressive facial recognition technology."

The protests come amid growing concern over the increase in the police's power to stifle dissent in Britain, following the recent introduction of a controversial public order bill, which empowers British police to take stronger action against peaceful protesters. Parts of the legislation came into force on Wednesday, days ahead of the coronation.

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